



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10**

1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101-3140

OFFICE OF
ECOSYSTEMS, TRIBAL
AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

December 16, 2014

Michael Routhier, Project Manager
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Alaska OCS Region
3801 Centerpoint Drive Suite 500
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5823

Re: EPA Comments on the BOEM Chukchi Sea Planning Area, Oil and Gas Lease Sale 193 in the Chukchi Sea, Alaska, Draft Second Supplemental EIS, EPA# 05-049-MMS.

Dear Mr. Routhier:

We have reviewed the Draft Second Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SSEIS) for the Chukchi Sea Planning Area, Oil and Gas Lease Sale 193 in the Chukchi Sea, Alaska, in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as well as Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Section 309, independent of NEPA, specifically directs EPA to review and comment in writing on the environmental impacts associated with all major federal actions. Under our policies and procedures we also evaluate the document's adequacy in meeting NEPA requirements.

This most recent supplement was prepared in response to the April 24, 2014, remand from the Alaska District Court and addresses the deficiencies identified in the January, 2014 opinion of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. It includes a revised resource development scenario, new information on affected environment and impact analyses, and consideration of alternatives and mitigation, as well as other changes.

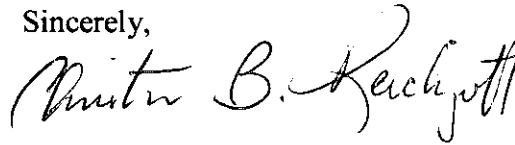
We appreciate the revisions made in response to our comments on the Preliminary Draft SSEIS, particularly our comments on the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program, water quality and background on the Purpose and Need section. We also recognize the usefulness of the various maps, figures and tables to the reader. We do, however, believe that the reader would benefit from the inclusion of an Executive Summary and recommend that one be included in the Final SSEIS. We also recommend that an Impacts Summary table be included in the Final SSEIS. We believe such tables provide a useful visual aid to clearly compare the impacts associated with each alternative. These suggestions are consistent with EPA's recommendations on prior EIS documents for Lease Sale 193.

As expressed in our comments on the last supplement, we continue to have substantial concerns regarding the potential for spills or releases to impact water quality and subsistence resources. However, we acknowledge that even with the revised production estimates, the probability of such an event remains low. We appreciate the incorporation of new mitigation measures, in part based on new information from the Deepwater Horizon incident, as well as the BOEM's additional planning and oversight responsibilities. We, therefore, assign a rating of "EC-1" (Environmental Concerns-Adequate

Information) to the Draft SSEIS. A copy of the rating system we used to conduct our review is enclosed for your reference.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the Draft SSEIS. Should you have any questions regarding our comments please contact me at (206) 553-1601 or by electronic mail at reichgott.christine@epa.gov, or contact Jennifer Curtis of my staff in Anchorage at (907) 271-6324 or by electronic mail at curtis.jennifer@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christine B. Reichgott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Christine" and last name "Reichgott" clearly legible.

Christine B. Reichgott, Manager
Environmental Review and Sediments Management Unit

Enclosure:

1. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Rating System for Draft Environmental Impact Statements Definitions and Follow-Up Action*

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Rating System for
Draft Environmental Impact Statements
Definitions and Follow-Up Action***

Environmental Impact of the Action

LO – Lack of Objections

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

EC – Environmental Concerns

EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce these impacts.

EO – Environmental Objections

EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no-action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EU – Environmentally Unsatisfactory

EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potential unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

Category 1 – Adequate

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis of data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category 2 – Insufficient Information

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category 3 – Inadequate

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act and or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

* From EPA Manual 1640 Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment. February, 1987.